



# **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **‘BLACK LIONS’ VISIT VETERANS**

By Anna Perry  
19th PAD

Even with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team busily preparing to officially stand up, Soldiers assigned to the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, found time for a holiday visit to the Colmery-O’Neil Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Topeka Dec. 19.

“The mission today is twofold,” said Lt. Col. Patrick Frank, the battalion’s commander. “First of all, our Soldiers are here to spread holiday greetings, as well as to see the commitment of the veterans who have served before them in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.”

“It also gives a connection to the veterans ... to see the uniform again,” said Beth Brown, voluntary service specialist at Colmery-O’Neil. “It shows that their military family still cares about them.”

The connection between active duty Soldiers and former active duty veterans became apparent as soon as the 1st Bn., 28th Inf., “Black Lions” walked through the center’s doors. Veterans and Colmery-O’Neil employees seemed to come out of the woodwork to shake hands with and greet the Soldiers.

“They get fired up seeing you guys walk in,” Frank told his Soldiers. “This is good stuff. Tell them your stories ... and listen to theirs,” he added.

The battalion’s younger Soldiers seemed captivated by the memories the veterans shared with them. One veteran recalled serving in the Battle of the Bulge. Another had suffered through a bout with malaria. One Soldier remembered losing a brother in WWII. Another veteran fondly remembered being a “Black Lion” years ago.

“This is our Army history,” Pfc. Cleveland Upton said. “It was great talking to the guys who paved the way for us.”

Some veterans and Soldiers shared similar thoughts and experiences, such as serving in the infantry and having a deep love and dedication for their country.

“Having the Soldiers here is encouraging,” said Roy Meadors, a U.S. Army veteran who served in Vietnam. “It benefits the entire community.”

“Both sides have gained,” Frank agreed.

Arranging to have his troops visit the veterans is something Frank said he’d like do again in the future. “We are looking into making this an annual event,” he said.

“Additionally, we’d like to come out for other holidays, such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day. “We’d also like to look into visiting other VA medical facilities in the area,” Frank added.

“I don’t know how many people we’ve touched today...many, many veterans,” Frank said. “This has been a great experience for everybody.”

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